



THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Vol. XLI. No. 9]

SEPTEMBER, 1866.

[Whole No. 1,003.

SERMON XXI.

BY REV. R. B. THURSTON, STAMFORD, CONN.

ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST.

"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."—1 JOHN v. 11.

WE are busy with cares of the present life. The day is not sufficient for them, and the night is worried with our toils.

At the same time we are surrounded with memorials of the brevity of an anxious and painful existence. We preserve them in our dwellings; we wear them abroad on our persons; we meet them in the streets. The monuments of the cemetery rise adjacent to every city and village. The white grave-stones on the long country highways remind the traveler that he is pursuing another journey. Every harvest season comes at once as a friend and a foe, having one hand filled with abundance to sustain life, the other hand letting loose diseases to cut short our days. War, the demon of destruction, sweeps down thousands on a field. "Pestilence walketh in darkness, and destruction wasteth at noonday."

Into the noise of this busy world, into this vale of death, a voice breaks speaking of eternal life. Let us listen to it, leav-

ing all the distractions of the times to meditate on the record which God hath given.

The word in the text rendered *record*, is sometimes translated witness, or testimony. The fact announced is that God has given us a testimony that we may have eternal life through his Son, Jesus Christ.

I. First, we inquire: What is this Eternal Life? The evangelical phrase means far more than endless existence. It includes holy character, and the everlasting blessedness with which God will reward holiness. The words are strong with gospel emphasis. They overflow with the riches of redeeming, renewing, and enrapturing grace. Eternal life is the life of the spirit in right, and, therefore, blissful relations to God. It is the life of obedience, submission, trust, and love, which the creature owes to the Creator, and which the Creator makes illustrious with his own acceptance and favor.

As such it is rudimentarily the life of the Christian in the present world. It begins, not at the hour of natural death, but at the hour of the new birth, in regeneration and faith. The assurance of the gospel is, "He that believeth *hath*," hath now, "everlasting life." It is a present possession. He is already "passed from death to life."

The eternal life of the Christian also has present, appreciable traits which distinguish it from the life of the unconverted. The fruit-bearing tree is distinguishable from all the fruitless trees, before it bursts into blossoms and bends with burdens of deliciousness. The root partakes of its character, and the rising trunk reveals it. So the Christian, in the very rudiments of his piety, shows by his heavenly aspirations, and by the fellowship with Christ into which his soul enters, that the eternal life whose record God has given, has begun in him and will hereafter bloom in celestial beauty and perfection. He is a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; and it only remains that he shall be transplanted to that paradise which no curse can ever enter.

To a most important extent, therefore, eternal life is independent of temporal circumstances. It requires secular duties to go on. It does not arrest the march of the body to the grave. It suffers this corruptible frame to fall down before the law of its mortality and to be dissolved. So far the sentence of justice must be executed—the dust to the dust. But the true life of the soul is the same after death as before, only transported into new scenes; and it will sustain in us the same conscious identity which now survives our childhood, when the resurrection shall have clothed the saint with the incorruptible body, fashioned like Christ's glorious body. Such is the nature of the eternal life which God "hath promised."

II. Secondly, we inquire what is the condition conveyed in the last clause of the text, "This life is in his Son." Here two points demand attention, one relating to Christ, the other to the believer in him.

In regard to the first point, it must be said that eternal life is in Christ, forasmuch as he is the author, revealer, and earnest of it. He is the author of it, as he is the immediate divine agent in creation. God made the worlds by his son. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Advancing from the material to the spiritual, and from the natural to the holy, he is the producer of holiness in which the redeemed become meet for the inheritance of saints. It is true we are renewed and sanctified by the Spirit; but he sends the Spirit; the king does that which is done by his ambassador; and it is not strange, but according to the analogy of his works when he says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."

Again, Christ is the revealer of eternal life. He does not bestow it and suffer us to remain in ignorance of the glorious boon and of its source. We do not forget that the idea of a happy immortality has been entertained by men on whom the light of divine revelation never shone; but how shadowy and uncertain it was—a sentiment of desire and hope rather than a solid and joyful conviction. Cicero preferred to believe it, even though it should prove to be an error, rather than hold the truth with those who denied it. We remember also, that in the obscurity of nature the idea of a better character than man of himself attains, has found place in some minds in connection with the idea of a corresponding happiness. It is the world's dream, and more than a dream—nature's dim prophecy of an elysium, the safe, peaceful, delightful abode of the good. But how indefinite, unsubstantial, powerless, to produce restoring, or even restraining effects upon the corrupt practices and violent passions of our fallen race those ideas have always been. They have wanted divine authentication, clearness and authority, to give them efficiency. Nature does not reveal eternal life with positiveness. At the most, she gives hints and excites hopes which yet leaves us to struggle with counter testimonies of death. Flowers nipped with frost, the foliage which autumnal footsteps tread into the dust, mountains and streams, peaceful and sparkling in genial light, and again awful and destructive in the hour of tempest, Saharas of burning sand as well as fertile plains, volcanos and glaciers, islands of ice and islands of fire; and after these the long, dismal annals of human convictions and fears, the superstitions and cruelties of dark and bloody ages, the strange rites in which men have shown their wrestlings with sin, mortality, and vengeful deities that rule the imaginary future—the moaning winds and wild elemental storms—the sadder groan-

ings and wilder conflicts of humanity—these are the records on nature's pages; and they are not testimonies clear, sure, consoling, enrapturing, of eternal life. The record of such a life God only hath given. It must be his record to be certain, to be power unto salvation; and in Christ it is given.

Christ is the divine person who in all ages has made communications to men. Under the former dispensation he set forth eternal life with a comparative brightness to patriarchs and prophets, who confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims here, looking for a better country, even a heavenly; but in the New Testament, and eminently in his own mission in the flesh, life and immortality are brought to vivid light. Simply compare the Christian ideas comprehended in the two words, eternal life, expressing the fullness of God's recovering grace to guilty, lost souls, forgiveness, regeneration, the resurrection of the body, the inheritance of heaven—compare these with all other religious ideas of men, derived from every other source, and who can hesitate to say, even with our wavering natural discernment, if there be an eternal life, Christ is the revealer of it. Apart from him the world has only a dim imagining, but no assurance of such a life.

Still further, Christ is the earnest of eternal life. He is not merely the revealer of it in his words; he is an instance, example, and pledge of it. By his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he translates the revealed doctrine into a living reality, and presents it as such to our human perceptions; so that John makes this emphatic declaration the preface of his epistle. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you THAT ETERNAL LIFE which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Christ was a man; and in him as a man, the eternal life was incarnated and seen. In respect to its moral elements he manifested it to the world in the flesh. Whatever is spiritual, holy and heavenly in human nature, restored from the fall he presents to us as a visible, audible, tangible, imitable, reality. Take away all that is selfish, sordid, and groveling in spirit—all that makes a man an enemy and a curse to his brother, and an offence to God, there will remain eternal life in him as in Christ. There will be humanity bearing again the image of God, possessing all the moral perfections comprehended in love, constituting us the children of the Highest, needing nothing more to render us meet, morally, for an everlasting abode in his presence and joy.

Thus, the eternal life, as to its moral elements, has become a

fact among men. They have a right to say, "We believe it, for we have seen it, have handled it."

But the question arises, How do we know that this life, perfect in its moral elements, is also in truth eternal? Because in Christ it re-appeared surviving the stroke of death. In him it joined moral perfection with deliverance from the curse of physical mortality and the sleep of the grave; and by raising him from the dead to a seat at his right hand on the throne, there to appear for us, in our behalf, the Father has given assurance that all who are in him by faith, shall also rise from the shame of sin and the corruption of the tomb, "to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Accept the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact, and that glorious conclusion follows. All who have embraced the gospel, and by the renewing grace of God have become partakers of eternal life in respect of its moral elements, shall also be partakers of its perpetual reality in "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the promise that God hath promised us, eternal life through his son." This is the oath of the Almighty, sealed with the blood shed on Calvary, and opening for us the heaven that received the ascending Redeemer; and this is our "hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, entering within the vail, whither the forerunner has for us entered."

Proceeding to the second point in the condition of the text, which relates to the believer, it must be said that eternal life is in Christ, because it is secured by our faith in him. There is this condition; and therefore the subject becomes immediately discriminating.

It would be delightful to human sympathies to stand before the weary, guilty, and miserable children of men, and proclaim, with an angel's trumpet, on the verge of opening graves, Have patience: a few days more, and you shall pass from all this fatigue, disgust, pain, sorrow, sin and fear to everlasting repose, holiness and felicity. No matter what you are in temporal estate, no matter what in moral corruption; God has provided for all unconditional, blessed, endless life!

But *can* we so read the Bible? The provisions of the gospel are indeed unlimited. The invitations are most free. Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Grace on the side of God is as free as the fountain, as the air, as the blue of the sky and twinkling of the stars. His mercy is boundless as the ocean, on which every man may spread his sail. The provision is sufficient and the offer of eternal life to all is sincere. But there is a

difference between the offer and the promise. The offer is absolute, for it is God's. The promise is conditioned, for it must be accepted on our part. The man must embark whom the ocean rolling at his feet shall bear to another hemisphere. The hungry must partake who will live by the harvest which grows for all. He must lift up his eyes who would see the starry firmament; and the man must take the way of the gospel whom that open way shall conduct to eternal life. He must set his affections on things above where Christ is risen. He must take up the cross and follow Christ.

How striking here are the limitations as well as assurances of the gospel. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Does not this prove that it is not power unto salvation to the unbeliever? "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Does not this prove that whosoever will not take it, will not have it? So the promises of the gospel are as solemn as the threatenings, by reason of the condition that is in them. Oh, with what majesty has the Creator invested the human will. He will not subtract from our freedom, or encroach on the responsibility with which he has entrusted us, even to save our souls. If you will not, he will not: if you choose not Him, he chooses not you.

This is not arbitrary. It lies in the very nature of moral existence and moral government. We have seen that eternal life has characteristics which are predicated of believers in the present world as of spirits in the world to come. They have it hereafter who have it here. They have no promise of it hereafter who have it not here, at least in its moral elements. On the other hand it is said specifically, "no murderer, (and he that hateth his brother is a murderer,) hath eternal life abiding in him;" and the unbelieving abide in death. Such men have in themselves, not the attributes of spiritual life, but the moral elements of death and perdition.

"In his Son." "In Christ." These peculiar New Testament phrases denote no natural, but a gracious relation in which believers stand by virtue of their faith, a relation which includes all the steps of religious experience, beginning in repentance, proceeding in faith, obeying in love, mounting into heavenly joy.

With this agree the remarkable words of Christ in his last prayer with the apostles: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"—eternal life, not through that knowledge, but consisting in the knowledge of God and of Christ—knowledge in the profound and spiritual significance of the gospel, not merely presented to the mind as a picture to the eye, but producing effect as a power in the heart, knowledge filling the understanding with sacred light, warming the affections with seraphic fervors,

pervading the whole soul with controlling and sanctifying energy—this is the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ which is eternal life.

Such is the record which God hath given of eternal life in his Son. It is life perfect in moral elements and after the redemption of the body perfect in its everlasting blessedness. It is offered as a free gift to all men originated, revealed and secured in Christ; but so far as it is an actual possession and enjoyment it is their's who are in him by faith. They "lay hold on eternal life," and abide in Christ as the branch in the vine. It is the gift of God in the provisions for it; and it is also the attainment of those who avail themselves of those provisions.

Passing now to some of the uses of the subject, we observe that the doctrine of Christ and our relations to him is the true philosophy of living. In him we secure everything that is pure, beneficent, exalting, holy, blessed and immortal in human nature—in this world approximately, in the future absolutely. The Apostle's words will be verified, "we are complete in him." For this present the doctrine of Christ makes the best men, and, therefore, the best constituents of all societies from the family to the state and the church, the best agents for all the true culture and refinement of humanity, for the general welfare and glory sought under that name of modern, magical import, civilization. The progress of eternal life in Christ as an experience among men carries with it all renovation, all reform, all true freedom, all virtue, all temporal blessedness with the earnestness of future felicity.

We need, therefore, no dim human speculations, no cold Emersonian philosophy concerning the conduct of life. Nay, so far as they turn any away from the Bible, they are worse than useless; for all the truth and power essential to the world's welfare are found in Christ: the only further condition is that that truth and power be faithfully interpreted and applied. For this reason the world's philosophy, literature, art, and science, its learning and enterprise, its commerce and government, always at fault before, will ultimately bow and give glory to the Son of man and Son of God. We may say with John, "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life:" and it is precisely this which the wisdom of this world has always missed.

We observe, again, that the fact of eternal life in Christ alone sets aside all merely human considerations as conditions of final salvation. That is God's testimony, and nothing remains for us but the simple terms of the gospel. Temporal advantages convey no promise of future felicity; and what is harder than

this to accept, even personal virtues which spring of nature only have no angelic power to open the gate of Heaven. Every thing which belongs to our natural character is dishonored when it stands in the light of this record—ETERNAL LIFE IS IN THE SON OF GOD.

Here we encounter the stone of stumbling. Here many of pure morality, warm affections, and high culture take issue with us. Here are those who find something good in every man, which by a flattering mistake they make the earnest of heaven; those beguiled by sentiment and formal worship; those who esteem domestic virtue, honorable dealing, and charity to the poor as the sum of all righteousness and religion; and those who deem that the mercy of God cannot permit suffering hereafter; and here, probably, are some of you, hoping for heaven, but not through faith, confident that you are candidates for eternal life, clothed in white robes by nature, or to be sanctified by the touch of death; yet not in Christ; and now I might bring many reasons to persuade you of the insufficiency of all such grounds of hope; but let me rather lead you back to the record which God hath given—eternal life in his Son.

If we do not accept this record we can have only light of nature and human wisdom concerning eternal life. If we doubt the gospel, however sincerely, we throw ourselves back on nature—dark, uncertain, tumultuous nature—for our religious views, our philanthropic expectations, and our immortal hopes. Is that a safe venture? Is it better to present ourselves at last before Him who must be our final Judge, in our own names, having credentials of a human seal only, or to seek admission at the gate of Heaven as having eternal life in Christ?

There is a stronger consideration. To reject the record impeaches God's veracity. This is found in the passage, out of the bosom of which the text shines as the intense, focal light of the gospel. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." That is: the believer having the real traits of eternal life in himself will distinguish them, and thus will have the witness or evidence in himself; but, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." Hath made God a liar! Dare we make the impeachment? Dare we incur the guilt of that presumptuous sin? Can we defy the warning which follows, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." This is the stern alternative of refusing to believe the record of God. Are we not then fatally out of the way if we do not learn our doctrine at the cross, and come to Christ for life?

But some of you believe the record: you say you do. You

believe that Christ is the teacher come from God: you believe that his blood was shed for the remission of sins: you believe that there is a real and vital change in regeneration: you believe that there is a new personal relation to God when you repent of your sins and receive redemption, even the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus. Why then do you forego by negligence, more inconsistent than unbelief, all the blessings of grace which brings salvation?

As children of time, we are only shadows pursuing shadows. The longest and most successful life, with all the blazonry of wealth and fame, what is it but a stupendous failure when we sink, as without a Saviour we must sink full soon, into the dark abyss of the unknown? How full of bitter mournfulness then is the short word we utter over our vanishing friends—"Gone—gone, forever."

But into this vale of mortality God has sent his record, ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST. All-glorious truth. Sublimest sentiment uttered by faith from the pale lips of corruption. Inscription of supernal bliss on all the crumbling walls of our earthly habitations. Arch of celestial light spanning a world of graves. Promise of the Creator boundless as the firmament of stars.

Mortals and sinners, embrace that record which God began to give at the gates of lost Eden, proclaiming which his Son ascended to open for us the everlasting Paradise. Let Christ be formed in you the hope of glory; then will your years or days, though few and sorrowful, or few and prosperous, be enough for trial and enough for joy, because steps to ETERNAL LIFE.

SERMON XXII.

BY REV. EDWIN S. WRIGHT, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

TEMPERANCE AND THE WINE QUESTION.*

"And to knowledge, temperance."—2 Peter i. 6.

PETER is writing to those whom he supposes to have set out to make a clean escape from the corruptions of the world through

*The following sermon was preached in the Presbyterian church, Fredonia, N. Y., Sunday, July 15, 1866, in accordance with a Resolution passed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, N. S., recently convened at St. Louis, recommending to the Pastors of the several churches, that the subject of Temperance be soon presented before their congregations.

lust. He sets before us the sanctified character, and the several steps by which it is reached. "Add to your faith virtue," or manly courage.

Faith in God, faith in Christ, as the moral basis on which to start, and then out of the ruins of this poor, broken nature, man may begin to build. Charity, or perfect love, completes the structure. It makes us willing to cast out self and sin, for the good of man and for the honor of God, and is the finished result of the redemptive work of Christ. But we cannot leap at once from faith to charity. There is a life-work of toil and struggle lying between these extremes. We have a daily work to do in adding to our faith the practical virtue which it calls for; and then comes the search for knowledge to understand what virtue is; and then, that we may avoid the influence of appetite and avarice, and the whole train of the selfish affections, in blinding us to the truth, we must add to our knowledge temperance, else patience will not follow, nor brotherly kindness, nor charity.

Many have begun this race toward the goal of a perfect manhood, and have run well as far as temperance, and then halted and fallen. Some of the brightest lights in the pulpit, men sound in faith, and eminent for their eloquence and learning, having failed to add to knowledge temperance, have gone out in darkness at the very noontide of life. Others of equal eminence have been saved from the same fate only by a timely warning to abstain from even the moderate indulgence of an appetite which cries "give, give," 'till the vortex of an irrecoverable ruin is reached, and there is no strength to draw back from the angry whirl which drowns in perdition.

In the early period of Temperance Reform in this country, there was a difference of opinion among good men in regard to total abstinence. And it was not till facts were brought to show the danger of the least indulgence in the use of anything that can intoxicate, that the friends of temperance were united on this question. The late venerable Dr. Nott, in a course of lectures delivered during the winter of 1838-9, says, "Years have gone by since I first became acquainted with the late Rev. Dr. Hosack, of Johnstown, gone to his rest. During a journey taken with him, soon after our acquaintance commenced, I observed that he used a little brandy and water with his dinner to aid digestion; and took a small glass of bitters before breakfast to insure an appetite; and though much younger than himself, I ventured to question the propriety of such a practice. He heard me patiently, and answered me playfully, as his manner was, 'Your logic tells me one thing, my experience another, and in the absence of other evidence I shall continue my former practice.' He did continue his former practice. We often afterwards met and discussed the matter. At length a public dis-

cussion of the whole question took place, at which both of us were present, when I was as delighted as surprised to find that my old friend Hosack had come over to our side. Said he, 'I continued to drink intoxicating liquor without apprehension until I saw one, and another, and another, (naming three distinguished individuals) become intemperate, when, thought I, if such men, as life advances, cannot withstand its growing influence, it is time for me to abjure its use.' His whole weight from this time was given to the cause of temperance—till full of years, and honored by the churches, he left the world without a blot upon his character."

This openness of the mind to conviction, and this Christian-like willingness to change our opinions or our habits, if they are found to be erroneous, is a necessary condition of all thorough reform.

The word temperance, as used in the text, has a wide meaning. It covers the whole ground of the appetites and passions. The original meaning of the word is, strength within, or the power of self-restraint as opposed to self-indulgence. It implies a strength of purpose which can keep the body under, throw off the solicitations of vicious appetites, and which can hold in check all lawful indulgencies when their influence is detrimental to any human being. The true principle of temperance carries us as far as it took Paul when he said, "If meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no longer meat, while the world stands."

Here, then, we have the true moral ground on which we ought to stand together on this great question of temperance. There are many things which God, in certain circumstances, has given us to enjoy, and which should be received with thanksgiving, which, in other circumstances, we should wholly abstain from—because of the perverted use which is made of them by our fellow-men, and because of the many offenses which they cause to good men. We can never come upon the true ground of temperance, as the subject presents itself in our times and in this country, except we adopt this principle, that there are some things which in themselves are lawful, which are not expedient; it is in such circumstances a moral wrong to use them or to encourage their use.

It was on the ground of a great moral inexpediency that good men gave up even the moderate use of alcoholic drinks in the outset of the Temperance Reformation. They were not sure that it was wrong in itself to take a table-spoonful of pure brandy and water before breakfast in the morning, and on rare festive occasions. But, when the evils of intemperance rolled up before them, in the appalling statistics of pauperism, crime and wretchedness, which were made public, and when they saw thousands swept into drunkard's graves, and into the drunkard's

hell—these good men said to themselves, "These were all once moderate drinkers. Human nature cannot be trusted with alcoholic beverages. Our example of moderate drinking will lead many to begin the same habit who will not restrain themselves within our limits. And so the awful offence will come, of crime, and poverty, and woe, temporal and eternal. It is not expedient for us to touch, taste or handle this creature of God, which, while lying in the juices of the fruit or the grain, was good, but which, now tortured into a maddening poison, is working such wide-spread ruin. We will no more taste this offending beverage while life lasts."

Thus these good men, from pure principle, and in the fear of God, having added to their faith virtue, or manly fortitude, and to virtue knowledge, when what they had deemed a lawful appetite was to be restrained for the good of their fellow-men—were ready to add to knowledge, temperance. The patience needful to resistance followed, and brotherly kindness and a more enlarged and universal charity crowned their closing years, till they were ripe for their reward.

So far as the use of brandy, rum, gin, and the whole class of spirituous liquors is concerned, commonly included in our temperance pledges, all temperance advocates have been of one mind. Total abstinence has been their only principle. And it is agreed, that the alarming signs of these times indicate the necessity of increased exertions on every hand, by personal example and by legislation, to stay the tide of crime and suffering which intemperance is now pouring in upon us.

But, at this moment of peril, a new difficulty is presented to our minds, which threatens to weaken the strength of our exertions. Within a few years past certain limited portions of the country have been found favorable for the culture of the grape. In consequence of the pecuniary profit to be obtained, these grape-bearing soils have been planted with this fruit.

For a time it was mainly sold as fruit in our cities and in our large market towns. But, as the business has expanded, the numbers who have entered into it have greatly increased. Among these are some of our best citizens, and a few of the members of our Christian churches. The ground has been taken that it is both expedient as a temperance measure, and also morally right to enter into the manufacture of the pure wines, thus pushing out of use the inferior wines of the country, and excluding the poisonous compounds now drunk. To sustain this view, it is said that the Bible sanctions the culture and use of pure native wines. It is also maintained that the history of grape-growing countries, like France and Spain, is in proof that there is less drunkenness where the pure wines are most largely produced, and most commonly used by the people.

We do not propose to examine this position in the spirit of controversy, nor with an assumption of superior wisdom. But we wish simply to sit at the feet of Truth, with an unbiased mind and to embrace her utterances. After weighing carefully the whole matter, and having candidly considered the chief arguments in defence of this position, we are fully convinced that it is not tenable, and that if maintained, it will seriously retard the progress of temperance.

We are willing to allow what has been so fully argued by the defenders of the wine-culture, that the wines in use under the Old Testament dispensation were intoxicating. But, allowing this, we shall endeavor to show,

I. That the extensive manufacture and use of the pure wines would now lead to increased intemperance, and to a more general sensuality among the people, and

II. That a proper view of the Bible on this subject sustains us in this position.

1. From the tendency of our nature to excess in all that pertains to animal indulgence, we infer that the manufacture and general use of fermented wines will result in the increase of intemperance.

In reference to our own country we specially infer this, because we have passed through a general vitiation of the appetites by a long course of intemperance. Even among the now temperate classes, and in all our Christian churches, there are many who from previous habit had acquired an appetite for intoxicating drinks.

There is also among the young, in some cases, an inherited taste for stimulants, which is now held in check by the force of public opinion. Now it seems to us certain that if the temperance and Christian sentiment of the country should become changed in favor of wines, the effect would be to give freedom to this now latent appetite. The consequence would also be fatal to multitudes who would go from moderate to intemperate wine-drinking, and from this to absolute drunkenness.

Moreover, our influence as temperance men would be cast on the side of general self-indulgence instead of self-restraint. A fleshly appetite would rule, and a sensual life would result. Habitual wine-drinking is now confined to the pleasure-loving portion of society, and is usually associated with luxurious living. The same result will follow, on a wide scale, if we take off the restraint which is now laid upon the first elements of appetite for intoxicating stimulants.

But, it is said, the use of the pure wines will destroy a thirst for the poisonous mixtures—satisfy the thirst of our nature for some kind of stimulant, and thus lessen the evil of intemperance. But this position is not confirmed by facts. A careful investi-

gation will show that even in the wine countries of Europe, intemperance does fearfully abound—from the excessive use of wines as well as from brandies and other spirituous liquors. It is the law of our animal life to go from a weaker to a stronger form of stimulus. We do not find the brandy drinker going from brandy to wine for exhilaration, nor the wine drinker descending from wine to water. The scale of appetite runs the other way. And, in examining facts, we should suspect some mistake, if we find this law reversed. For what is the subtle element in wine which so arrests the progress of appetite more than in other exhilarating beverages. Persons may have gone to the wine countries of Europe, who were favorable to the use of wines. They may have indulged in the use of them only among the higher circles, where restraint is practiced among guests. They may have traveled in a season of the year which is not the peculiarly wine-drinking season. I am informed that among the peasantry of France and Italy, as well as in other wine-producing countries, the season of the year when drunkenness most prevails, is about three months after the grape-harvest—sometime in November or December—after the wines have become sufficiently fermented to be exhilarating, and yet having the cheapness of new wines.

A correspondent of a religious paper—the Episcopal Recorder—who has resided some years in Italy, states that, while drunkenness is a vice almost unknown among Italian gentlemen, this is by no means true of the peasants, who are greatly addicted to drunken revelry and carousal after their day's work is done. A Swiss physician, in the Canton de Vaud, says that the curse of drunkenness has followed the culture of the vine in that region, and that a lamentable increase of sin and sickness has been the result, and he gives it as his own experience, that it is difficult to get a laboring man to do a day's work properly, for by the time the day was half spent, he would have made himself unfit to be trusted.

We have similar testimony from Rev. Mr. Cochrane, a returned missionary from Oroomiah, one of the most fruitful grape-growing regions of Persia. In conversation with him on the subject, I was informed that it is a universal custom among the people to lay up in large earthen jars, sealed with skins, a great supply of wine, soon after the grape harvest. In the month of December these jars are opened, and the people in the neighborhoods and villages go from house to house, having a general time of surfeiting and drunkenness.

The missionaries find the habits of intemperance from this cause a great obstacle to their work. They have been compelled to resort to special efforts to promote total abstinence among the members of the churches, and among the pupils of the Semi-

nary. The least encouragement from the missionaries which should lead to wine-drinking, would produce fearful moral results.

Such is the testimony of reliable witnesses in regard to the general use of wines as a beverage among the people of wine-producing countries. But even if there were any reasonable probability that gross intemperance might be lessened by casting out the more poisonous drinks now in use, the grape-producing territories in our country are so limited in their extent, and will be so slow in coming into large fruitfulness, that but little effect can be produced on a wide national scale, in reducing the quantity of the old poisonous wines and drinks. At the same time the license coming from the advocacy of wine-raising and wine-drinking, in those small portions of the country where the grape is produced, will speed and encourage the more free manufacture and use of the present poisonous beverages. And while the small quantity of wine produced in our own locality along this beautiful shore of the Erie will be only as a single drop cast into the ocean of the burning drinks now in use, the influence sent forth to encourage their increase, by the argument for the use of wine, will be as the ocean itself in its wide-spread and disastrous effect.

There is another consideration which lies against the position that the production of the native wines will be a reformative measure. The method of reform is too remunerative. All genuine reforms are so aimed at the sensual and selfish side of human nature, that they call for great self-denial on the part of those who would promote them. A method of temperance reform which proposes to yield large pecuniary profits for restraining the appetites of men is to be mistrusted. History has not such precedents of successful reform.

So far as the profit is concerned, it should not influence temperance men on a question of such vital moral importance.

But, where vineyards are already planted, they may become sufficiently profitable to the owners by the culture and sale of the fruit, while the united force of the abstinence sentiment will thus be preserved, and all harm to the temperance cause will be avoided. As a temperance measure, it is safer to aim at the doing away of all wine-drinking, as a beverage, than to attempt to lessen the evil of drunkenness by wine-producing. We are not called to promote a lesser evil, but to remove the whole evil of intemperance, by refusing even pure wine to the appetite for stimulus.

2. We now come to the chief argument which has been used in support of the general culture and use of the native wines. I refer to the Bible aspect of the question.

In the outset, we do not dispute, as we have before said, that

the wines which were made and used in Palestine under the Old Testament economy, and even during the days of Christ and the Apostles, were like the wine now made from the grape, capable of fermentation and productive of intoxication. It is not to be supposed that there was as yet sufficient light on the subject of temperance, to lead the people to take such pains, as some would suppose, to preserve wines without fermentation for the sake of avoiding exhilaration.

There was nothing inherently wrong in planting vineyards then, any more than now.

But then, as now, the tendency of human nature was to excess. It was not only a tendency to the abuse of this particular industrial interest of grape-growing and wine-producing, but also to the abuse of many of the customs of society and the lawful relations of life. Thus the marriage relation ran into polygamy, and the relation of the servant to his master into oppression. In view of this abuse, God, foreseeing the final result, very clearly began to take measures to confine the people within such limits of abstinence as would save the original interests of industry and of life from abuse.

Laws of restraint were instituted, with such prohibitions as pointed to further advances in reform as the people should be prepared for it. Prophets were inspired to thunder their anathemas against drunkenness. "Wo unto the drunkards of Ephraim." "Look not on the wine when it is red, when it moveth itself aright in the cup. For at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." What is this but recognizing the danger of even the first look upon wine, lest excess be the result. But God did not choose to reform society at once, nor to avert the danger of drunkenness, by first commanding total abstinence, or by demanding that all the wine-presses of Israel should be destroyed. He did not choose to break in forcibly upon the great industrial interest of wine-producing by a positive prohibition of wines. Neither did he break up at once the system of polygamy, nor the system of temporary Hebrew servitude. But He did set measures agoing toward each and all of these reforms; and this by educating the people, under Moses and the Prophets, in the principles of all reform, and by setting forth a coming dispensation of greater purity and spirituality under Christ—a dispensation in which the lusts of the flesh, and all fleshly ordinances, were to give place to the fruits of the spirit, which are love, peace, purity, patience, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. Thus the people were to be drawn out of slavery, polygamy and intemperance, by the growth of a higher spiritual life, rather than driven out by penal enactments which required them to change at once their courses and customs. God was preparing to write the law in their hearts.

But it is said that wine is classed in the Old Testament, with other natural productions, as a blessing. Among others, the case of the blessing of Jacob upon his son Judah, is quoted in proof. "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine."

Our answer to this is, that the patriarch is walking in the dim light of his age, in which wine was regarded as a choice blessing; just as half a century ago it would not have shocked the public sentiment if a good father had wished his son plenty of corn and brandy. Jacob blessed his sons according to the low grade of blessing prevalent in a more material and fleshly dispensation. The people were not yet prepared to appreciate the higher blessings of a matured spiritual dispensation. It would sound oddly at this day to hear a godly father, in his dying moments saying to his son, "God give thee plenty of wine."

A distinguished modern writer, in alluding to the progressive nature of the grade of blessing under the new dispensation, as compared with the Old Testament economy, very truly says: "There is certainly a considerable contrast in the ways of God, as presented in the Old Testament and in the Gospel of Christ. There he maintains a government more nearly political and earthly; here more spiritual and heavenly. There he is more legal, appealing to interest in the terms of this life; here he moves in the affections and covers the ground of eternity. Here he substitutes the inspirations of liberty and the law written on the heart." "Becoming at the first, in a certain sense, a barbarian people's God, he only submits to conditions of necessity by which he is confronted, in preparing to be known as the God of love and sacrifice, and Saviour of the world." *

Again, we are pointed to the New Testament, and to the example of Christ. It is said that the Saviour of the world drank wine himself, and favored its use.

Our reply to this is, that when Christ came he was preceded by a forerunner, who may be supposed to have indicated by his own habits of life, the general principles and character of Him whom he heralded, and to have given an outline of the nature of his dispensation. John was a perfect model of abstinence in all respects. And we have no positive proof that Christ was in the habit of taking wine himself. But if he did occasionally at feasts taste the wine, judging from his self-denying life, and from the nature of his mission, it is but reasonable to suppose that he did it to avoid the prejudices of the people, so that their unbroken attention might be fixed upon his moral teachings, which were laying the axe at the root of every moral evil. His

* Bushnell's Vicarious Sacrifice.

enemies were ready to misinterpret his motives for being present at a feast into an argument for wine-drinking and gluttony. Christ rebukes them by saying, "Wisdom is justified of her children." That is, all who were looking at his true motive and object would interpret all his acts according to his true character and mission, which was, in the wisest and best manner, to lead the people up to those higher principles of the gospel, where they would renounce the flesh and be filled with the spirit. It was not the immediate work of Christ to institute direct outward reforms in the customs of society. Neither was it the first and great work of the Apostles. Christ had but three years of public ministry in which to set forth the great truths pertaining to his redemptive work. These truths he mainly dwelt upon, knowing that in them lay the great principle of all reforms.

On the same principle we reply to the argument which is adduced from our Saviour's miracle at Cana of Galilee, when he turned water into wine. He took the custom of the people as it was, and made use of it the more strikingly to convey to their minds an idea of his Divine power, and to authenticate his mission as a great moral teacher. If water had been wanted, and wine had stood in the water-pots, he would doubtless have reversed the order and turned the wine into water. His object was neither to give to the world an argument for wine-drinking, nor water-drinking, but to show his power, as the Son of God, in circumstances which were best adapted to secure the moral result. Just as in allowing his miraculous power to be exercised in turning the rod of Aaron into a serpent, it was not the design of God either to favor or to rebuke directly the superstition of Egyptian magicians, but to show himself to be the true God, whose doctrines received would remove all superstition.

It is also said that the Apostles drank wine as a beverage.

We have no direct proof of this. On the contrary, their writings indicate great abstinence. "I keep my body under," was Paul's motto. In his advice to Timothy, "Drink no longer water, but take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine oft infirmities," he speaks more like a physician who is relaxing a former prescription of total water-drinking, than like one who would either use wine himself as a beverage, or advise others to use it.

But not to dwell further upon these spots which seem to lie here and there upon the open face of truth, it is evident that abstinence from the manufacture and use of wines must be the principle on which we stand, if we would cast our whole weight on the side of temperance. It is a good rule in all matters of doubtful expediency, to take the side which can injure neither ourselves nor the public. Total abstinence is certainly safe; it

can injure no one; it may save thousands. Temperate wine-drinking is not safe; it may send thousands to drunkard's graves. Shall we not then as good citizens and as earnest Christians come together without division or dissent, and lay our hand to the great reform of temperance with new energy and zeal. The recent reorganization of the Temperance Society of the country, and the call to new sacrifices and exertions, prompt to a speedy onset against all the obstacles which lie in the way of this noble enterprise of humanity and religion.

If any who have formerly worked with us have for a time been drawn aside by abstract discussion, or by looking only at the culture of the grape as an important industrial interest, which is innocent, as a fruit-producing business, but evil when passing into wine-cellars to become fermented, or in part to be made into brandy for purposes of exhilaration, let us yet be hopeful that, foreseeing the evil, all good men will hide themselves therefrom, so that seeing eye to eye, and joining hand to hand, we shall yet be one in this great work of reform, and our deluged and smitten country shall be wholly redeemed from the curse of drunkenness.

Finally, there is a providential aspect of the subject, which enables us to interpret the present will of God in regard to the great question of abstinence.

Wherever the religion of the Gospel has secured an influence, it has been promotive of reform in respect to the three great vices of society, viz: slavery, polygamy and intemperance. The tendency of reform, under the favoring providence of God, has been, not toward a moderate indulgence in these vices, but toward entire extermination. Slavery is now destroyed in this country. Polygamy, is confined mostly to heathen nations, and drunkenness is being removed in proportion to the active power with which the gospel is promulgated among the people.

It is not in accordance with the aspect of history, interpreted by Providence, to maintain that practices and customs are always expedient, which in a darker age were allowed. As well might we defend American slavery on the ground of Hebrew servitude, or advocate the custom of polygamy because God in a former period did not at once denounce and destroy it. There is great allowance to be made in favor of progress in all reforms, from an advancing civilization, and from the enlightening influence of the Christian religion. We all admit that the Gospel includes the principles of all true reform. But it has been slow and dim in the unfolding of its power for salvation from all the evils of sin. At first its light glimmered in types and shadows. Then it grew brighter as the coming of Christ advanced, who was to be as a refiner's fire and fuller's soap to all the vices of society. It is a law of his kingdom, that reform shall follow in the pathway of

light. No generation can with impunity go back to dwell in the darkness and sin of a past age of less light and knowledge. And shall we of the nineteenth century, upon whom wave after wave of light is breaking and pointing us to the heights of a nobler, purer, holier life, as a preparation and prelude to the coming and reign of Christ, in his spiritual kingdom, shall we now fall back and wrap ourselves in the antiquated vestments of a vanishing dispensation, in which some things now not expedient were allowed, for the want of clearer light and greater knowledge? God forbid it. Having, as a Christian people, begun in the spirit, are we to be made perfect in the flesh? Or, rather, having advanced beyond the rudiments of the world toward a higher and more spiritual life, shall not our motto be as we lay aside a fleshly life, "touch not, taste not, handle not."

Charity suffereth long and is kind up to the last extreme of darkness and want of knowledge on every question of morals, where we are sincerely desirous of the truth. With great numbers avarice and appetite are stronger than reason and conscience in turning the scale of an argument. Even good men are not impervious to the sophistry of self-interest and the love of gain. But if the light of honest conviction is quenched through the bias of self-indulgence, or through pride of opinion, neither the example of Christ, nor his teachings, warrant us to expect either personal prosperity or a preserved Christian influence.

Let us look for light, and walk in the light, at whatever cost. Let us rise to higher planes of virtue till the circle of the Christian grace is complete. From our character and life let the pure light of a perfected Christian manhood go forth to illuminate and bless the ignorant and the degraded children of vice and suffering, even as the blended colors of the sun fall in winning purity and warmth upon every man that cometh into the world. Let no ray be left out of this perfect orb of light, which comprehends within itself all the graces of the Christian life. But let us add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

SERMON XXIII.

BY REV. CHARLES HODGE, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF ORIENTAL AND BIBLICAL LITERATURE IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
AT PRINCETON, N. J.

THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE IN A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light."—Ps. cxix. 130.

WE all recognize the Bible as the source of every thing which distinguishes us from the heathen. It is the fountain of knowledge, happiness, and holiness. When we consider how admirably it is adapted to produce these results, the question forces itself on our attention, Why has such a book, though known and read for centuries, hitherto accomplished comparatively so little? The general answer to this question is, no doubt, to be found in the depravity of men. But there are specific causes of this lamentable fact which should be pointed out, and, if possible, counteracted or removed. To one of these, it is the object of this discourse to call your attention. It cannot be denied, that it is only a comparatively small portion of the inhabitants of Christendom, even, which has hitherto been brought under the direct and well applied influence, of the word of God. It is in this fact that we find one of the principal causes of the little effect which the Scriptures have hitherto produced on the character and condition of men.

In every country there are three classes of persons who, in very different degrees, are influenced by the prevalent religion. The first includes those who sincerely receive its doctrines, and endeavor to live according to its precepts. The second embraces those who, although acquainted with all their religion professes to teach, do not make it practically the standard of faith or rule of conduct; and the third consists of those who, being ignorant of its doctrines, are only indirectly affected by its influence. The first of these classes is always small, and the last large, in proportion to the truth and excellence of the religion. Because the clearer the light, the more do those who love darkness recede from it. In Christian countries, accordingly, the number of those who in faith and love embrace the religion of the Bible is very small; while the number of those who are only indirectly brought under its influence is very large. We do not mean to assert that this indirect influence is a matter of little moment. We believe, on the contrary, that it is difficult for any man to live in a Christian community, no matter how remote he may keep himself from all the direct means of religious

instruction, without having more correct views of the Supreme Being, of moral obligations, of the nature and destiny of the soul, than were ever enjoyed in heathen lands. He is, therefore, brought under a higher moral influence, he is elevated as a rational being, and freed from the degrading tendencies of the thousand absurdities which enter into every false system of religion. Notwithstanding, however, the extent and value of this indirect influence of the Bible, the effect is slight, compared to what may reasonably be expected from its being brought to bear directly and constantly on the character and conduct of men. It is to effect this object, to bring the word of God to bear effectually on the formation of the human character, and the regulation of human conduct, that is the end of all Christian institutions and efforts. We wish to subject the minds, the hearts, and lives of men to the Bible, that is, to truth and righteousness. This is the goal of our race, the prize of our high calling, the consummation and reward of all our labors.

How, then, is this object to be accomplished? How is the Bible to be brought to bear most effectually on the intellectual and moral character of men? We venture to answer, by employing it in the education of the young. We do not mean to disparage the preaching of the gospel, or any other means of religious instruction, but we mean to say that, if we can learn anything from the nature of moral causes, or from the general course of God's providence, if men are to be subjected to the Bible, they must be educated by the Bible; it must be made the great instrument of their intellectual and moral culture. That this has never yet been extensively effected, is an anomaly in the history of our race, and the opprobrium of christendom. Ever since the revival of letters we have employed, in the early stages of education, heathen fables; and in the more advanced stages, heathen poets, historians, orators, and moralists. These have been, and still are, the instruments most extensively employed in the education of Christian youth. Need we wonder at the result? Notwithstanding partial exceptions, it is certainly true that the Scriptures have been systematically excluded from the places of education; and that the great majority of Christian youth have been brought up more under the influence of heathen minds and models, than under the inspired minds and models of the word of God. We have said it was an anomaly, that the professors of one religion should employ, mainly, works imbued with the spirit and principles of another in the education of their children. This assertion will hardly be questioned. Every Mohammedan child, who is taught anything, is taught the Koran, from the Straits of Gibraltar to beyond the Ganges; wherever the religion of the false prophet prevails, there the standard of religion is the great instrument of education. The

result is what might have been expected. The religion of the land is really the religion of the people. Its influence is diffused through all departments of society, and its spirit and precepts are practically regarded. The fact, that the followers of Mohammed employ thus extensively their sacred writings in the business of education, is not to be accounted for on the supposition that their literature is confined to the Koran; the reverse is notoriously the case. In romance, in poetry, in history, in original and translated works, their authors have been abundant and successful. But believing the Koran to be of God, they have acted accordingly. They have not professed one religion, and brought up their children under the influence of another.

The general neglect of the Bible, for the purposes of education, cannot be accounted for on the ground of its want of adaptation for this work. The object of education is to fit man for his duties and destinies; so to exercise his intellectual faculties, and so to mould his moral feelings, that he may be prepared to do and suffer what God requires at his hands. For this purpose, it may be shown the Bible is pre-eminently adapted. It is, in fact, the history of God's plan of educating the human family, and therefore furnishes us at once with the model and the means of intellectual and moral culture. The Bible commences with the simplest truths; communicating knowledge in the form of history, interspersing biographical details, with general narrative; employing symbolical actions and instructive parables; reducing general principles to sententious maxims; at one time reasoning with men in a manner to tax all their powers, at another addressing them in such strains of sublimity or beauty, as to waken up all the finer feelings of the soul. It everywhere addresses the moral feelings as the noblest attributes of our nature. It thus furnishes us with all the materials we need for this great work. The memory, judgment, imagination, may here all be exercised. Every power of the soul finds endless and boundless matter for the most strenuous effort, while every sympathy and feeling of our nature is brought under the purest and most effective influence.

We would now call your attention to some of those special considerations, which would secure for the word of God that place in the education of the young, from which it has been so long and so generally excluded.

1. The word of God is truth. It is truth in opposition to fiction in history, to error in doctrine, to false principles in morals, to all exaggeration in description. As every other production must, to a greater or less extent, abound in misstatements of facts, or erroneous views of truth, or false principles of action, or false models of character, need the question be asked, whether it is not desirable to avail ourselves of a book, so well adapted

for the purpose in every other respect, of which, and of which alone, it can be said, it is truth?

2. The word of God is not only truth, but it is infinitely important truth. The history which it gives is the most important of all histories. It gives us an account of the creation, fall, and redemption: it traces the development of the purposes of God's mercy from the first promise through all the institutions, events, and prophecies of the old dispensation. It unfolds the history of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Redeemer, and the establishment of his kingdom in the world. Is it meet that Christian youth should be sedulously taught the history of ancient kingdoms, or modern dynasties, and left ignorant of this history of the origin, apostacy, and redemption of their race? And yet, thousands who learn the one never learn the other.

Again, the doctrines of the Bible are beyond comparison important. They relate to the nature and works of God; to the nature, character, and destiny of man; to the rule of duty and the method of salvation. Are these topics less worthy of investigation than the laws of motion, or the opinions of philosophers? And yet, Christian men become skilled in the sciences, though they remain ignorant of God and themselves.

3. The contents of the word of God are not only true and important, but their influences are all healthful. As the great object of education is the adequate development of all the faculties of our nature; the great desideratum is the discovery of means by which the intellect may be exercised, while the moral susceptibilities are properly impressed. The great majority of the subjects of study, in the ordinary course of education, either do not address themselves at all to the moral feelings, or their tendency is deleterious. The natural sciences may be considered neutral; as a man may become an adept in them all, without having one moral emotion called into exercise. Ancient literature, the poets, historians, and orators of classic paganism, is in many respects positively injurious. In the Bible we find truth, adapted at once to enlarge the intellect and purify the heart. The idea of God, in the infinitude of his perfections cannot enter the mind without expanding all its capacities, while it sheds into the inmost recesses of the soul its sanctifying influence. As in the rays of the sun, light and heat are inseparably blended, and by being thus blended create and reveal all the beauty of creation, so the knowledge of God at once enlightens and purifies the soul. I speak as unto Christians, judge ye what I say. Is it not when you have the clearest conceptions of the divine character, that you have the most ardent aspirations to be like Him? Is it not by beholding His glory that you are transformed into his image? It is, then, under this same influ-

ence we would have every infant mind to expand. We would not attempt to raise flowers in a cave, nor make smoky torches a substitute for the sun. We would let the light of heaven in upon the soul.

There is probably no one idea of so much consequence, in its influence on character, as the conception of God, none which acts so powerfully on the moral feelings of men. It is therefore of the last importance that, from the first, this knowledge should be imparted to the mind. In the Holy Scriptures it is so presented, that a child can understand, though Gabriel cannot comprehend it.

Though the same remark, as to the purifying tendency of divine truth, might be made in reference to all the doctrines of the Bible, we specify the description which it gives of the character of Jesus Christ. It has long been admitted that truth, when exemplified in the life of an individual, is more effective than when stated in abstract propositions—that biography is more useful than moral essays. It is more intelligible, more interesting, and more exciting. It enlists other feeling than the moral ones on the side of virtue. We love the man as well as his excellencies.

We believe Christianity is as much indebted to the superhuman loveliness of the character of Jesus Christ, as to any one of its doctrines. There is in this faultless model of human excellence, a moral power which few are able to resist. The lips of the most abandoned infidels have generally been closed when this was the theme. They could revile his apostles as impostors, but deliberately to speak evil of the Son of God, requires a degree of depravity to which few have ever attained. Let the child, then, be made acquainted with the Saviour, let him learn his history, let him contemplate all the varied exhibitions of his character, let him see how he felt towards God, and how he acted towards man; how he treated the poor, the afflicted, the ignorant; how he bore afflictions, and sustained injuries; how he lived, and how he died—and he will know more of morals than all the world can teach him; he will have an evidence of the truth of Christianity more persuasive than all external testimony; and he will have a more salutary moral influence constantly operating in his mind, than all the systems of morals can exert.

Again, the Bible contains a perfect rule of moral duty, and on this account is adapted to exert the happiest influence on the mind. God has created the human soul with moral susceptibilities, which are as much an original part of its constitution as its intellectual faculties. Both classes of our constitutional powers need to be cultivated to secure their being rightly exercised. Were it possible for a man to live without anything to

inform or exercise his intellect, his mental powers would be almost dormant; and if they were as much neglected as his moral sense commonly is, he would be as dull in his perceptions, as imbecile in judgment, as erroneous in his inferences, as he is insensible or perverse in his moral sense and judgments. But as it is impossible for a man placed in an active world to avoid having a thousand objects which daily exercise his intellectual faculties, so it is impossible for him to escape the influence which the circumstances in which he is placed, and the opinions of those around him exert over his conscience. In every age and nation, therefore, we find that the character of men, their moral sentiments and course of conduct, are determined partly, indeed, by individual peculiarities, but mainly by the tone of the society of which they are members. Such has been the effect of these circumstances in diversifying the moral judgments of men, making one class regard as virtues what another condemns as vices, that many have been led to doubt whether conscience was really an original part of our constitution. But the diversity is no greater here, than on other subjects. What is truth to one mind is error to another, what is beauty to one eye is deformity to another. But, as to all men some things are true and others false, as to all eyes some things are beautiful and others the reverse, so to all hearts some things are right and others wrong. The diversity is not as to their being a difference between right and wrong, for this sentiment is absolutely universal, but as to what is to be considered right or wrong. How is this all-important subject to be determined? As the class of intuitive truths is very small, so the class of acts intuitively right or wrong is small. Conscience can no more infallibly decide on duty, than reason can on truth. As, therefore, reason must be instructed, so must conscience. And as conscience is one of the most powerful and imperative of our principles of action, as it, of necessity, decides in favor of what the understanding perceives to be right; and as the character and destiny of men depend on the correctness of its decision, it is of infinite importance that it should be rightly directed. This, however, is a difficult task. We need not advert to the state of degraded tribes or individuals, to illustrate the fact, that the moral sentiments of men are frequently erroneous; it is rare to find in the most refined and Christian societies, a man whose moral sense is on all subjects rightly informed.

If, therefore, there be any where revealed a perfect rule of duty, it is self-evident that it should be universally known. This rule is found in the Bible, and no where else. It is there presented in every form. It is reduced to one all-comprehensive principle, love to God and man. It is summed up in ten perspicuous commandments. It is expanded into innumerable

special precepts and prohibitions, so as to meet every supposable case. That such a rule should be so neglected, that men should be carefully instructed as to other matters, and left to learn as they may, what is sin and what duty; what will secure the favor of God, and what his frown, is indeed strange. It is the more strange, because all men need this knowledge, and they all are susceptible of the acquisition. Moral truth contains its own evidence; as soon as it is clearly presented to the mind, it is perceived to be truth, and at once and for ever enlists conscience in its support. The moral law, moreover, comes not only in its own self-evidencing light, but with the authority of God. It is pronounced in the ear of conscience by that voice which alone conscience feels bound to obey. Its penalty (which is included in the very nature of law) is, therefore, viewed, not as a result probable from the operation of moral causes, but as fixed and inevitable from the purpose of Jehovah.

Obedience to this law is solicited, by motives addressed to every right principle of our nature; to the dread of misery and degradation; to the love of happiness and excellence; to a sense of duty; to gratitude and benevolence. These motives are not only diversified; they are each the highest in its kind. The evil threatened is infinite; the good promised is eternal; the duty enjoined is obvious; the appeal to gratitude, when apprehended, irresistible. If one died for all, then are all dead, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him that loved them, and gave himself for them. This is the peculiar and most powerful motive of the gospel. It is one of the principal means by which the doctrine of redemption operates on human character and conduct. Did the Bible contain no other doctrine, and present no other motive, it would embody more moral power than all other books besides. The Bible, then, sheds on the soul all the influences of heaven. Shall we shut these influences out? Shall we carry our children out of their range, and place them under those perverting, blinding, and degrading influences which from all other sources act upon them?

4. We have said the word of God should be employed in the education of the young, because it is truth, important truth, and truth of the most purifying moral tendency; we now add, it is divinely authoritative truth, resting not on the deduction of reason, nor on the testimony of men, but the authority of God. The effect of this consideration is great and varied. Its influence on the mind of a child is in all respects favorable. It produces the habit of relying on the testimony of God, which is one of the highest acts of obedience of an intelligent creature, and the best preservative from that fatal spirit of skepticism, which destroys all peace of mind, and unsettles all principles of action; which makes its victim the miserable creature of circumstances.

It produces, therefore, a fixedness of character, by presenting a firm foundation for all our most important opinions. It confers the inestimable blessing of a settled faith, which is in no way so likely to be attained, as by being brought up in habitual converse with a book recognized as of divine authority. By giving certainty to all the declarations of the Holy Scriptures, it adds immensely to their power. It is not a matter of conjecture that God is, and is what the Bible represents him ; that the soul is immortal and responsible ; that Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God ; that the threatnings and promises of God are expressions of his purposes ; but these are settled truths in view of such a mind. It tends also to produce humility ; to destroy the spirit of self-dependence and self-confidence, so characteristic of those who walk each under the guidance of his own taper.

If the ingenuity of man had been permitted to decide on what would be the most desirable of all books by which to form the human character, it would probably have said, it should be one whose contents are true, important, of a good moral influence, and, if possible, of divine authority. These are the attributes of the Bible, and of the Bible alone. If it is desirable that such a book should exert an influence at all on men, it is self-evident that it should be brought to bear on the mind in its earliest years. Then opinions are adopted, habits formed, feelings moulded, principles fixed. If all this is done under evil influence, the evil and injury can never be entirely remedied. On this subject, however, there can scarcely be any diversity of opinion. We must all admit that it is desirable to have our children brought up under the influence of the Bible. The question is, How is this to be accomplished ? It is not very easy, in a country like ours, to answer this question. It is probable that no one plan will ever be proposed adapted to the purpose, but we shall have to avail ourselves of various methods, according to the peculiar circumstances of different sections of the country. The object, however, should be constantly kept in view, and frequently presented in its magnitude and importance. It should be the definite purpose of every Christian and philanthropist to do all he can to have every child in the land, every child in Christendom, and every child in the world, made acquainted with the Word of God. This is the great result. For this end, every Christian parent should see that adequate provision is made in reference to his own children. But as the number of parents who have leisure and inclination to attend to this subject is very small, if left to be accomplished in this way it will never be done. Ministers of the gospel have a larger field, and a higher responsibility. I presume not to say how the duty must be performed ; but that every pastor of a flock is bound to see

that every child within his charge is taught the Holy Scriptures, will hardly be denied. He may do this through the instrumentality of personal instructions, or by Bible-classes, and Sunday-schools. In whatever way, it is evidently one of the most imperious of his duties, that the thing should be done.

There are, however, so many who do not stand in relation to any particular congregation, that a large portion of the children of the country will grow up ignorant of the word of God, if nothing more than pastoral instruction be resorted to. This has, hitherto, been the main reliance of the Christian church: the melancholy results we every where discover. It is probable, not more than one half, perhaps not a fourth, of the inhabitants of Christendom, or even of this country, are regular attendants on public worship; that the children even of this portion are very imperfectly instructed in religion, whilst those of the remainder, on this plan, are left, and have been left, almost entirely unprovided for. Relying on parental or pastoral instruction, the church has permitted the great majority of the children born in Christian lands to grow up ignorant of the contents, and emancipated from the influence of the word of God. This, which after all is the most crying evil of the Christian world, can, we doubt not, by steady and wise efforts, under the blessing of God, be corrected. In a Christian community there is such a general respect for the Scriptures, that the cases are comparatively rare in which any serious opposition would be made to their introduction, as a regular subject of study in the common schools: not merely to be read, but to be studied as they now are in our Sabbath-schools. Let any one imagine what would be the influence on the population of this country, if one hour a day should, in all the common schools of the land, be devoted to this purpose. What an amount of Christian knowledge would be communicated, and what a healthful moral influence would be exerted. Every child who is taught to read would be taught to know God, and Jesus Christ; the rule of duty, and the plan of salvation.

In our higher schools the same plan should be continued; if children learn history, let them include the history of the Bible; if they learn geography, let them study the geography of the Bible. Is it not preposterous, making the professions which we do, that we allow our sons and daughters to be taught the history and geography of profane antiquity, but make no provision for what we acknowledge to be of far greater importance? In classical institutions a regular exercise on the Holy Scriptures, in the original, might be introduced with equal advantage. And in our colleges, the study of the Bible is already, to a certain extent, attended to, and, as far as we know, without exciting in any quarter the least objection.

Though these, and other means may, and we think ought, to be adopted, to secure the grand object of raising up a generation of scripturally educated youth, yet the main reliance seems to be placed at present on the system of Sabbath-school instruction. A system peculiarly adapted to the wants and circumstances of the country, and which has already been crowned with the most encouraging success. It is the very object of this institution to do what has so long and so lamentably been neglected: to bring the light of divine truth to bear upon the opening minds of children. The work, however, is far from being accomplished: a large proportion of the children, even of this country, are still left to grow up, in a great measure, ignorant of God, and of the Scriptures. And when we look to other and less favored lands, the prospect is appalling. We should, therefore, contemplate the reasons which demand renewed exertion to promote biblical instruction.

1st. Its influence on individual character and happiness. If the remarks we have already made, as to the necessity of moral culture to the right exercise of conscience and the proper formation of moral principles, be correct, it is evident that the only possible way in which virtue can be maintained is by knowledge. And knowledge, not of speculative truth, which imparts no light, and exerts no influence over the moral sense, but such knowledge as the Holy Scriptures alone contain—the knowledge of God, of the moral law, of the plan of salvation, and the retributions of eternity. Such is the universality and power of the corrupt passions of our nature, that no external force can restrain their exercise. The power must be the moral power of truth, and the Spirit of God. Such, too, is the sluggishness of all good feelings, that no excitements other than those which flow from the Scriptures, are adequate to call them into exercise. The effect on the individual of the knowledge of the Scriptures is to expand his mind, to purify and restrain his moral feelings, to raise him in the scale of intellectual and moral being. Go into the abodes of ignorance; contrast the state of the immortal minds there presented, with that of those on whom the word of God has exerted its appropriate influence. How vast the difference between spirits of the same nature and of the same powers. The benefit, however, is not confined to this general elevation and improvement. It is the best possible preparation for the saving reception of the gospel. This is a fact which rests on long-continued and often repeated experience. The power and success of the gospel in the ordinary course of God's dispensations, (which is to guide our conduct) are uniformly, where other things are equal, in exact proportion to the attention bestowed on the religious instruction of the young. It is from the class of scripturally educated youth that

the church receives her largest and most valuable accessions. It is in those districts, countries, and ages, in which children are best instructed, that true religion most prevails. If this were not the case, it would be an anomaly in God's government, it would destroy all incentive to the duty which he has enjoined, to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; it would be falsifying the declaration of his own word, as to the general result of moral culture, and dissolving the connection which he has established, in the moral as well as the natural world, between causes and their appropriate effects. Of all the advantages which one man can bestow upon another, none can be compared with securing for him an education under the influence of the Bible. Of all the injuries which one man can entail on others, the greatest is to shut out from them the light of truth; to allow them to grow up far from the influence of the word of God. Let your minds rest upon this point. Let the conviction fasten itself upon you, that you can in no way do so much good—in no way more effectually promote the salvation of your fellow-men, than by educating them by the Bible. He who feeds and clothes the body does well; but he who furnishes the soul with the aliment of truth, and the habiliments of righteousness, does infinitely better. We are bound, therefore, in view of the value of the human soul, considered as an intellectual, moral, and immortal being, to do all we can to bring the truth of God to bear on the forming stage of its existence.

2d. Influence on society. The soul of man is not formed to commence and run its everlasting career between high walls; neither influencing others, nor receiving impressions from them. No individual is thus isolated. He acts, and is acted upon, in ten thousand ways; and the character of society is the result of this reciprocal influence of its members. The only way in which we can promote the virtue and happiness of the community, is by operating on the individuals of which it is composed. Every well-instructed and pious mind which we are instrumental in raising up, becomes a source of knowledge and healing influence to all around. Our own interests, and the interests of our children, and of the world, are deeply concerned in the increase of such morally educated men. On them, the order, purity, and happiness of society depend. In this country, where the majority of the people have in fact, and of right, all power in their hands, it is self-evident that our political existence depends on the moral character of the people. This is a sentiment on every man's lip, and should be in every man's heart. As the influence of free institutions, in elevating the intellectual character, and the social condition of the mass of the people, in developing their resources, and increasing their power of usefulness, is undeniable, it becomes a moral duty to ourselves, and to our coun-

try, and to the world, to do all we can to perpetuate them in the midst of us. We now stand forth the prototype of nations, imparting impulse and direction to their efforts. If we fail, and fail we must, unless our youth be made acquainted with the Scriptures, we shall be accountable for all the evil that failure must occasion.

The position of our country, however, is not only interesting, as it exhibits the first extended experiment of free institutions, but as here the church and religion are unincumbered, and left to sustain themselves, under God, upon their own moral power. We have not a doubt of the ultimate success of this trial. We would not for the world have it otherwise. If Christianity cannot live and thrive unsustained by the state, it is not of God. But how it shall live, and to what extent it shall flourish, God has wisely and mercifully made to depend on the fidelity of his people. It is through them he works in sustaining and advancing his cause. On us, therefore, rests the tremendous responsibility of carrying on this work. If we do not do our duty, the cause cannot, according to God's appointment, prosper. And in no way can we so effectually subserve its interests, as in promoting the cause of biblical instruction.

The career which we are destined to run as a nation is lofty; from our relative position; from our extent of territory; from the character of the people; from the nature of our institutions; from the identity of our language; from the state of civilization—our influence among the nations, and on the world, must be unprecedentedly great. Shall it be for weal or woe? Shall it be to disseminate error and vice, or truth and virtue? Shall it be to lead on the van in the moral conquest of the world, or shall it be to oppose the progress of its Redeemer, until we ourselves are cast off, and trodden under foot? The answer depends on the character of the young; and this, on the mode of their education, unless God means to convert the world by miracles.

We commend this subject to your hearts and efforts. We hold up the cause of Sunday-schools as intimately connected with that of religious education; as one of the main hopes of our country and the world. We call on all who love the cause of the Redeemer; who desire the virtue and happiness of their fellow-men, and the salvation of their souls, to address themselves to this great work, in humble dependence upon God, and in the full assurance that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.
